

Section 1: Executive Summary

In 2002, the Binational Executive Committee formally endorsed the formation of a Lake Huron Binational Partnership in order to coordinate environmental activities in the Lake Huron basin. The United States Environmental Protection Agency, Environment Canada, Michigan's Departments of Environmental Quality and Natural Resources and Ontario's Ministries of Environment and Natural Resources form the core of the Partnership by providing leadership and coordination. However, a flexible membership is being promoted which is inclusive of other agencies and levels of government, Tribes/First Nations, non-government organizations and the public on an issue-by-issue basis.

The approach to Lake Huron differs from the Lakewide Management Plans (LaMPs) of Lakes Superior, Michigan, Erie and Ontario in that there has been no systematic assessment of beneficial use impairments, identification of causes, definition of critical pollutants, determination of chemical sources and loadings, and release of a report for comment. The alternative approach focuses on areas of obvious importance, tackles these as priorities in the first action plans, and will expand over time to include other activities that investigate the less severe or obvious issues in the lake. Three priority issues - contaminants in fish and wildlife; biodiversity and ecosystem change; fish and wildlife habitat - were given priority for immediate action while other issues will be tracked and added as the Partnership pursues this process of updating and expanding activities over time.

Actions in Areas of Concern or resulting from specific local priorities are also part of the Partnership's agenda. These actions, which are being managed domestically, include the continued efforts at Saginaw Bay, monitoring of Spanish Harbour's recovery and science based investigations of bacterial and algae fouling of beaches along the south-east shore of the lake. Other Lake Huron concerns include: low water levels, botulism, cormorant populations, blue-green algae blooms in Georgian Bay, aquaculture, emerging contaminant concerns and global climate change.

This 2004 Action Plan provides information on priority issues, trends, goals, research, monitoring, on-the-ground activities and future needs. Consistent with an adaptive management approach, it is not fully comprehensive, but will be expanded and added to over time. Contaminant trends in fish and wildlife have been summarized, current knowledge of changes in the fish community, threats to aquatic life and habitat have been outlined along with proposed draft environmental objectives for fisheries management. More detail on any of these topics can be obtained from source documents and fact sheets developed by the Partnership. The Action Plan section itself highlights the activities already underway and planned over the short term (2 years) and future efforts over the long term (5 years). These actions are geared towards improving knowledge, understanding function and change, monitoring trends, and restoring, rehabilitating and protecting the Lake Huron ecosystem.